



**HEADQUARTERS**  
**MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE - IRAQ**  
**BAGHDAD, IRAQ**  
**APO AE 09342-1400**

14 April 2007

Soldiers serving in Multi-National Force-Iraq:

On April 11, Secretary of Defense Gates announced that tours of duty for most of us serving in Iraq would be extended from 12 to 15 months. This was, I know, tough news for many of you. It was particularly difficult news as a leak of this action back in Washington meant that your chain of command was unable to notify you or your families before the extension was reported by the press.

I want to assure you that Lieutenant General Odierno and I would not have asked to maintain the surge force levels in Iraq – a request that led to your tour extensions – if we did not view the additional forces as being absolutely necessary to our ability to accomplish our mission. That mission – to help Iraq improve the security for its population – is intended to provide Iraqi leaders with an opportunity to begin to tackle the crucial issues that must be resolved to achieve a sustainable outcome in Iraq.

While it is too early to judge the success of the surge and the emphasis on population security in Iraq, we have seen some positive results – though the enemy has certainly sought to overshadow our achievements by carrying out sensational attacks. Nonetheless, your visible presence alongside Iraqi soldiers and police has begun to restore a sense of normalcy to many areas that have seen little other than violence over the past year. Your hard work has also led to the uncovering of sizable weapons caches, the detention of a number of death squad and car bomb network members, the bringing to justice of a number of militia extremists, a decrease in the number of sectarian killings, and a renewal of commerce in many markets and neighborhoods.

Clearly, however, there is an enormous amount of hard work ahead. And as this past week's bombings of the Sarafiya Bridge and Council of Representatives in Baghdad reminded us, we face a barbaric, thinking enemy. There will undoubtedly be more tough days ahead for us and our Iraqi partners. Indeed, this is the most complex environment I have ever seen; it is even more challenging than it was during my two previous tours here. And now, more than ever, it is crucial that we remain mission focused and mentally tough. Your support for your battle buddy, your example to your Iraqi counterparts, your professional competence, the energy you share with others – each of these will matter in the months ahead. Though our new recruiting motto is "Army Strong," each of you is also still an Army of one!

Finally, I want to assure you that I appreciate the hardship and strain the extension will put on you and on your families – to whom I have also written a letter. My family and I understand the challenge of long deployments. In fact, this tour of duty in Iraq is my fourth year-or-longer deployment since 2001. We know what you and your loved ones have gone through in recent years, and we and all Americans are grateful to you.

Thank you for your service and your sacrifice. You have earned your spot in American history as a member of America's new greatest generation.

Army Strong!

David H. Petraeus  
General, United States Army  
Commanding